The Shipping Board were asked by Royden to order the builders to hand the vessel over to us. He is afraid, however, that their answer may be nothing more than a temporising one, as the question is still unsettled whether we shall be allowed to take possession.

There are several other vessels also nearing completion in regard to which this question will very soon arise. . . ."

Northcliffe proceeds to quote a characteristic protest which Hughes, Premier of Australia, had sent to Colonel House. It was as follows :—

" 1. The ships in question are for the Common-wealth Government and not for private firms.

2. For all practical purposes Aus-
Protest from tralia is an independent nation.
Australia 3. During the War it has played a distinguished part and has now a large force at the Front.

4. The intention is to use these vessels exclusively for War work and for trade between Australia and America, and for carrying wheat and flour to Britain and the Allies.

5. That it would be an unfriendly act to confiscate these ships which belong to another nation, which for three years has been gallantly fighting, and the act would be so regarded by Australia.

6* That we cannot agree to lease these vessels as this is not an acceptable alternative.

7. That trade developments between the two countries would be impaired if American Government refuses to exempt these vessels from requisition.[55] (ends)